



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes World AIDS Day *Department of Health Urges Testing for At-Risk People*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of World AIDS Day December 1, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging people at risk for HIV/AIDS to get tested, according to Krissie Guerard, HIV program manager for the Department of Health.

As of Dec. 31, 2008, 441 cases of HIV/AIDS have been reported in North Dakota since HIV/AIDS surveillance began in 1984. So far in 2009, a record 37 HIV/AIDS cases have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health. The previous record, set in 2008, was 28. The increase in HIV cases could be attributed to previously diagnosed individuals moving into the state and new diagnoses due to an increase in testing. About one-fourth of the people estimated to be HIV positive are believed to be unaware of their infections, underscoring the need for increased efforts to reach at-risk populations with HIV testing and prevention services.

“World AIDS day is great opportunity for us to work together to help reduce stigma around HIV and promote HIV testing,” Guerard said. “If you do not know if you are infected with HIV, you could be spreading it to others. People need to know how to keep themselves from becoming infected with HIV so we can reduce the spread of this disease in our communities. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.”

Established by the World Health Organization in 1988, World AIDS Day serves to further global awareness and focus prevention efforts on the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Observation of this day provides an opportunity for governments, national AIDS programs, churches, community organizations and individuals to demonstrate commitment and action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

HIV can be prevented by avoiding or not engaging in risky behaviors. Risky behavior includes unprotected sex, needle-sharing for drug use, or tattooing and body piercing. HIV testing is available at test sites throughout the state. The test sites are staffed by trained personnel who offer free and confidential HIV testing and counseling to those at risk. Rapid testing is available at most of our testing sites and results are available within 20 minutes.

For information about HIV testing and other HIV/AIDS services, call the North Dakota Department of Health HIV/AIDS Program hotline at 800.70.NDHIV or visit the program's website at www.ndhealth.gov/hiv.

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